

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 037894

FOR ATHERTON

FOL RPT RABAT 846 ACTION SECSTATE INFO ALGIERS

NOUAKCHOTT MADRID CAIRO JIDDA 16FEB.

QUOTE

S E C R E T RABAT 0846

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MO SS AG

SUBJECT: GOM VERSION OF SECOND AMGALA CLASH

REF: RABAT 0844, ALGIERS 0399

1. DURING CALL BY AMBASSADOR FEBRUARY 16 (WHICH OCCURRED PRIOR RECEIPT ALGIERS REF) MININFO TAIBI BENHIMA PROVIDED INFO ON LATEST AMGALA CLASH THAT AMPLIFIED EXPLANATION A RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL GOM SOURCE GAVE DATT EARLIER IN DAY (REPORTED THROUGH DATT CHANNELS). PICTURE THAT EMERGES IS, PREDICTABLY PERHAPS, ABOUT AS DIFFERENT AS POSSIBLE FROM ALGERIAN VERSION REPORTED ALGIERS REF.

2. BENHIMA SAID SOME ALGERIAN UNITS HAD BEEN CUT OFF BY RAPID GOM ADVANCES IN NORTHEASTERN SAHARA. GOM HAD INFORMED GOA THROUGH CHANNELS (WHICH HE DID NOT IDENTIFY) THAT THESE

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TROOPS WOULD BE ALLOWED TO PROCEED BACK TO ALGERIA WITHOUT

INTERFERENCE FROM GOM FORCES. GOA HAD NOT RESPONDED TO THIS MESSAGE, BENHIMA SAID. INSTEAD, THESE ALGERIAN UNITS WERE REINFORCED FROM TINDOUF AREA. GOM INTELLIGENCE DID NOT DETECT THIS BECAUSE SEVERAL DAYS OF HEAVY FOG IMPEDED RECONNAISSANCE IN AREA. ALGERIAN FORCES, WHICH HAD BEEN PROCEEDING BACK TOWARD TINDOUF, TURNED SUDDENLY TOWARD AMGALA AND IN LIGHTNING STRIKE AFTERNOON FEB 14 FELL UPON MOROCCAN GARRISON, EMPLOYING "HEAVY ARTILLERY" AND "GREAT STRENGTH". (NOTE: GOM SOURCE TOLD DATT THAT GARRISON WAS DEFENDED BY ABOUT 140 MEN, AND THAT ALGERIANS ATTACKED IN OVERWHELMING STRENGTH EMPLOYING ARMOR AND ARTILLERY.) BENHIMA SAID MOROCCANS SUFFERED 32 DEAD AND "CERTAIN NUMBER" TAKEN PRISONER. GOM ALSO SUFFERED ARTILLERY LOSSES. WHEN GOM RELIEF COLUMN REACHED AMGALA FROM SMARA, ALGERIAN FORCES HAD WITHDRAWN.

3. BENHIMA NOTED THAT KING'S MESSAGE WAS "CALM". HE WENT ON TO SPECULATE THAT ALGERIANS MAY HAVE STRUCK AT TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF FOG. ALTHOUGH THERE SOME DISAGREEMENT WITHIN GOM, HE SAID SOME LEADERS FELT THAT ANOTHER ATTACK MIGHT COME AFTER THE END OF TRIPARTITE RULE IN SAHARA, ON FEBRUARY 28, THIS TIME ON SMARA. AIM OF SUCH AN ATTACK WOULD BE TO SET UP SAHARAN GOVERNMENT THERE. NEUMANN

UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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